PRESIDENT'S COMMISSION
ON THE
ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT KENNEDY
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WASHINGTON, D.C. 20002

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MEMORANDUM FOR MEMBERS OF THE PRESIDENT'S COMMISSION

SUBJECT: Progress Report

I have prepared this report for your review and consideration prior to the next meeting of the Commission. This report summarizes the most important steps initiated since the last meeting of December 16, 1963, regarding (1) staff and administration; and (2) the substance of the Commission's work.

1. Staff and Administration

The process of selecting the five senior members of the Commission staff from among the most distinguished lawyers in the country is almost complete. The selection of Mr. Francis W. H. Adams of New York City and Mr. Albert E. Jenner, Jr. of Chicago was approved at the last meeting. A third lawyer, Mr. Joseph A. Ball of Los Angeles, has agreed to join the staff. These three lawyers have all begun to assume their responsibilities as members of the Commission staff. One additional lawyer, William T. Coleman, Jr. of Philadelphia, has agreed to assist the Commission and will report initially next week. Biographical information regarding these lawyers is attached as Appendix A.

Efforts have also been made to select approximately six junior staff members. Mr. Rankin has reviewed all the applications for employment received by him and the members of the Commission over the past few weeks, and has initiated efforts to develop applications of other highly qualified younger lawyers from all parts of the United States. In view of the nature and importance of the Commission's work, every effort has been made to obtain the most highly qualified younger lawyers approximately five to ten years out of law school. At this time the following men have been selected: David W. Belin, Des Moines, Iowa; Burt W. Griffin, Cleveland, Ohio; W. David Slawson, Denver, Colorado; Arlen Specter, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and Samuel A. Stern,

Washington, D. C. Biographical sketches are included in Appendix B. I am hopeful that all applicants selected for junior staff positions will report for duty next week, or in any event, by January 20.

In addition to legal personnel, we have given some thought to specialized services which may be of assistance to the Commission. Dr. Winfred Overholser, recently retired as Superintendent of Saint Elizabeth's Hospital, is available to advise the Commission and staff on psychiatric and related issues which are developed in the course of the Commission's work. We have consulted with the State Department regarding an able Russian specialist, in or out of Government, who may supply a special expertise on questions relating to Marina Oswald or Lee Harvey Oswald's experiences in the USSR. In addition, we are obtaining names of historians who may be available to consult periodically with the Commission or staff, and to assist in the drafting of the report.

Satisfactory arrangements have been made during the past few weeks for the securing of experienced non-legal assistants and the equipping of the Commission's office. Other government agencies, such as the Department of Defense, are loaning the Commission secretarial personnel to staff the lawyers who will be working for the Commission. Setting up of the files to be maintained by the Commission is currently being accomplished under the direct supervision of experienced personnel supplied by Archives. Physical alterations of the offices in the VFW building and other administrative matters, such as securing of the necessary equipment and facilities, have been managed with the assistance of the GSA staff.

2. Substance of Commission's Work

As we decided at the last meeting, it is necessary for the Commission to obtain all material currently in the possession of government agencies relevant to the assassination of President Kennedy. To this end, we have written to the ten major Executive Departments, fifteen commissions or agencies, and four Congressional committees, soliciting such information. With regard to the major departments and investigative agencies, I have requested that, where not already done, an official be designated to serve as liaison with the Commission. In addition, I have requested each of these departments or agencies to make the necessary arrangements to ensure that all relevant information which subsequently comes to their attention is made available to the Commission as soon as possible. Mr. Rankin has been exploring these liaison problems in further detail with the representatives of the various investigative agencies during the past two weeks.

Since the last meeting of the Commission, we have received copies of the Secret Service report dated December 18, 1963 and the investigative materials from the Federal Bureau of Investigation requested by the Commission. Two copies of all such materials have been supplied by the FBI. In order to keep you currently advised as to the materials available in the Commission's office, I am enclosing xerox copies of the synopses and table of contents (where supplied) of the four major FBI reports which document the summary report, and the 68 other reports reflecting the total investigation conducted by the Bureau. Because of their importance, I am also enclosing copies of various other materials, including the autopsy of President Kennedy, in the accompanying folder. Subject to your further wishes, I shall request Mr. Rankin to supply you with similar summaries, where possible, of any other investigative materials received in the future from the FBI or other sources. Additional materials are due shortly from the Secret Service which will reflect the investigation that agency conducted of the assassination for some ten days after November 22 until the FBI assumed sole responsibility. Material from CIA will be obtained next week.

On January 8 we received the first set of reports from the Attorney General of Texas. These include the following:

Three bound folders entitled:

(1) Investigation of Operation Security Involving the Transfer of Lee Harvey Oswald November 24, 1963.
(2) Investigation of Assassination of the President.
(3) Investigations Not Directly Connected with the Jack Ruby Case.

One File Folder holding manila folders containing the following:

(1) Letter from Attorney regarding property of Lee Harvey Oswald.
(2) Edwin A. Walker file.
(3) President's landing at Love Field.
(4) Persons assigned to handle security for President's visit.
(5) Trade Mart floor plans.
(6) Chronological Reports.
(7) Some thirty-five (35) Pictures of the Texas School Book Depository Building.
(8) A folder entitled Kennedy's Shooting.
(9) J. D. Tippit (photograph of area of shooting and location of Oswald's arrest).
(10) Lee Harvey Oswald (basement photographs).
(11) Reconstruction photographs.
(12) Evidence.

These materials and those yet to arrive will be reviewed by the staff as quickly as possible.

Mr. Rankin and I have given further thought to the organization of the work of this Commission in line with the thoughts expressed at the last meeting. I think it would be desirable to commence by dividing the substance of the work into approximately six areas. Any such division at this point, of course, must necessarily be tentative. I am enclosing as Appendix C a tentative outline prepared by Mr. Rankin which I think will assist in organizing the evaluation of the investigative materials received by the Commission. This outline divides the work into the following six areas: (1) Assassination of President Kennedy on November 22, 1963; (2) Lee Harvey Oswald as the Assassin of President Kennedy; (3) Lee Harvey Oswald: Background and Possible Motive; (4) Oswald's Foreign Activity (Military Excluded); (5) Murder of Lee Harvey Oswald by Jack L. Ruby; and (6) Security Precautions to Protect the President. As the staff reviews the materials, the outline will certainly undergo substantial revision, and I hope that all members of the Commission will advise Mr. Rankin of any suggestions they wish to make regarding this outline.

Each of the first five areas will be assigned to a team of two lawyers from the Commission staff, one senior staff member and one junior staff member. Mr. Rankin will retain immediate responsibility for the area of security precautions and one of the most experienced younger lawyers will work with him. All the investigative reports, as well as any significant letters from the public or articles from the press, relevant to each of these areas will be reviewed by the appropriate lawyers. Each team will be instructed to prepare as soon as possible a comprehensive memorandum organizing the facts already developed by the agencies in the area under study, developing the issues raised by the investigation and public commentary, containing recommendations as to further investigation to be conducted by the agencies and/or by the Commission, and submitting a revised outline of the area. Once these memoranda have been obtained, I think that the Commission will be in a much better position than we currently are to assess the scope of the work which remains to be done.

Simultaneously with this effort, of course, high priority is being given to preparation for taking the testimony of Mrs. Oswald and any other witnesses which the Commission believes should be interviewed under oath in the near future. One member of the staff has been reviewing all the interviews of Mrs. Oswald and related material in order to prepare adequately for this interrogation. I anticipate that the results of his work will be submitted to Mr. Rankin next week for approval and the testimony of Mrs. Oswald can be taken later in the month. The FBI has

been requested to conduct a complete background investigation of the Paines. Similar investigations will be requested of other people in Dallas and Fort Worth who associated closely with Oswald and his family. The proposed interview of Mrs. John F. Kennedy will be discussed with the Attorney General during the next week.

In addition to these comprehensive memoranda from the members of the staff, two additional projects have been initiated which will assist the Commission in its work. First, a chronological chart will be prepared which contains appropriate date and time of the relevant facts developed in this investigation. Such a chronological chart will serve a useful function in portraying facts of interest to the Commission and, in addition, might serve as a useful investigative tool in deciding what additional investigation, if any, is desirable. Certain areas of concern to the Commission, such as the movements of Lee Harvey Oswald on November 22, 1963, or the movements of Jack L. Ruby on November 24, 1963, particularly lend themselves to this approach. In view of the tedious nature of this project, Mr. Rankin has taken steps to enlist the assistance of two agents of the Internal Revenue Service to work on this project on a full-time basis.

The other major project which has been initiated is the preparation of a name index, which will contain the names and brief identification of each person whose name comes up in the course of this investigation. Mr. Rankin suggests that this be done by means of a card index which will contain the name of the witness or agent, a brief description, and identification of the report in which the name appears. He believes, and I agree, that such an index might serve certain useful investigative purposes and that it will have considerable utility in enabling us to keep track of the investigation and to prepare the final report.

At the next meeting of the Commission, Mr. Rankin will review all the projects under way and suggest for our consideration priorities of action and a timetable for the progress of the Commission's work.

Chairman